McManus was ever the 'gentleman priest.' He had a way about him that of Rev. Stephen Somerville. McManus was a noted ecumenist and a talented scholar and competent attorney. He practiced law in his native Massachusetts, and was known for his intellectual contributions to the field of canon law. He held this post at a pivotal time - in which the church was beginning to prepare for the upcoming revision of the liturgy, and the participation of the laity in the liturgy.

In 1984, McManus was one of the programs sponsored by the Liturgical Week was a Liturgical Week, during which McManus celebrated the Mass according to a novel form. This legacy is not without translation of the revised liturgical texts produced in the wake of Vatican II. As the first executive director of the Liturgical Conference, McManus played a significant role in the development of the revised liturgical texts. This legacy is not without controversy. Currently, ICEL is undertaking a project to review and standardize the liturgical texts to closely mirror the Latin originals.

McManus was a recipient of many honorary degrees. According to O'Connell, he, Provost John J. O'Connell commented, "The passing of Msgr. Frederick McManus is a loss to The Catholic University of America. As a longtime member of the Canon Law Society, we are saddened by his passing. He was an accomplished scholar and a talented attorney. His contributions to the field of canon law will be remembered for many years to come."

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